"Where there is no vision the people perish"

THE POETRY REVIEW

33 PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

American Office: 570 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK, 22, U.S.A.

Trade Agents: The Rolls House Publishing Co., 2 Breams Buildings, London, E.C.4
Advertising Agents: The Aldridge Press, 15 Charterhouse Street, London, E.C.1

EDITED BY JOHN GAWSWORTH, F.R.S.L.

Vol. XLI **SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1950** No. 5

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(i)

INVOCATION TO AMERICA

The late LORD RENNELL OF RODD

A frenzied man's ambition
  The madness none can mend
Avows that our perdition
  Is his ignoble end;
And all we hold as duty
  To God or man, or sought
To consecrate to beauty
  For him are less than naught.
And yet, despite disaster
  And holocausts of slain,
The race he could not master
  May set this down to gain:
That kinfolk, once one nation
  Now two, vast oceans part,
Have had sure revelation
  How one they are at heart.
Their feud entailed no quarrel
  Goodwill could not dispel,
Their issue was not moral
  Each wished the other well.
But tardy evolution
  Still fettered minds that move
To the assured solution
  Along an old-world groove,
And, faced with youth's defiance
  Demurring to obey,
They branded non-compliance
  Rebellion. But to-day
We feel the bond's persistence
  Through all that made for change
Not scission, time nor distance
  Availed to quite estrange.
No trace of ancient friction,
  No prejudice nor pride
Impair our firm conviction

Of common aims allied.
The white-starred flag in union
With our red cross unfurled
Proclaims free-will communion
To save a menaced world.

This, the last poem of James Rennell, 1st Baron Rennell of Rodd, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., (1858-1941), British Ambassador to Italy, 1908-1919, poet of *Ballads of the Fleet*, who in 1930 was awarded the Poetry Society's Minshull Cup for Reading and Speaking Verse in a Foreign Language, has appositely been communicated by Mr. S. Thomas Ansell, and is published by kind permission of the author's widow. —Editor.

LORD WAVELL

(Commemoration Service, Westminster Abbey, June 7th, 1950)

T. W. RAMSEY

Under the sea that was deeper than sound,
Up through the fronds of drifting smoke
Where the banners swung, serene, profound
Staves of music and none spoke

But silence, the swords of light were swung
Through the swaying sea that covered us, clove
Waters and bowed expectant throng
And the weeds of the incense as fragile as love

And even as strong. The crowd's white
Mute expectancy by a shrill,
By a sudden shaft that was keener than light
And far and thin like wind over hill

Was pierced; the thin arrow went home
To every heart, as the far call
Of brass commanding and urgent drum
Ushered the traveller into hall.

Along the avenue with four flames,
East and West and South and North,
The great commander homeward came
Naked and lonely as he went forth.

For the great flag and the plumed hat
Covered but left his glory bare,
Where a multitude stood in silence, and that
Is loneliness enough and to spare.

We saw the slowly moving wood
Quietly come to its place of rest.
Steady the bowed flames stood
North and South and East and West.

We call to memory the valiant head,
The eye that could measure immediate duty,
The days of command all sped
Even as the fall of dust on beauty.

For the hour comes when dust lies ashen
On barrack square and muffles the din;
And the gay ribbons and the brilliant baton
All have to be handed in.

And the raiser of armies himself is carried
Quietly out of the lofty hall,
And the arms that in heat of noontide harried
The desert are folded under the pall.

To *Lochaber no more* and *After the Battle*
The river of sorrow deeper than sound
Will bear him as light as a weaver's shuttle
To meet the chieftains on their own ground.

Light as the light that dapples the river,
Smooth as the curling ripples run,
Water returns the gift to the giver
And bears the bubble up to the sun.

The President communicates the following letter received from Lady Wavell:—

23 Kingston House South,
S.W.7.
21st June, 1950

Dear Mr. Ramsey,

To you and to all members of the Poetry Society my family and I send our heartfelt thanks for your kind sympathy in our great loss, and for the tribute you have paid to my husband's memory.

With gratitude from,
Yours sincerely,
EUGÉNIE WAVELL.

TWO SHEPHERDS

(For Walter de la Mare)

The late VIVIAN LOCKE-ELLIS

On a wild Gallic mountain-side,
Through foothills from the plain,
Two shepherds on two slopes abide;
Were never more than twain.

They listed where the harpist strummed
Old airs of Brittany,
And when insurgent ocean drummed
Through straits of Severn sea.

Down all those grey green-caverned coasts
Where that pent ocean raves,
Longshore from hordes of stammering ghosts
And past weed-mantled listening-posts
What voices are to hear,
What voices, cries out of old graves,
And fastnesses of fear!

Still list those shepherds on those slopes
To voices from the plain,
Where still the ghostfoot wolvine lopes,
Nor will give tongue again.

VIVIAN LOCKE-ELLIS

(Died May 30th, 1950)

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

This poet we shall miss
As we should miss the rare benignant sun
That stills our weeping in October days
Or peers through clouds to send a sudden ray
Of quizzing humour to a world

Grown grim with time,
Slyly repetitive, urging response
By present warmth and quickened wit
To point an inner world,
Sending us fortified, though clouds dismay,
Because still beauty, laughter, light and joy—
Though intermittent through those living clouds
That clutter us for yet a little span—
Shall shine again within the May of death
And find high solstice in eternity.

(ii)

TRUE AESTHETE

RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR

The Principle of Beauty is pure flame
  That seethes the heart in a divine unrest.
Who takes the vows for beauty tastes mere shame
  If he lapse long from an eternal Quest.
Not his green arras of the Ivory Tower
  Amid a luxury of violins;
But desert sands, and orchards all a-flower,
  And wayside Calvaries, and Pilgrim inns.
He companies with beggars, craftsmen, kings,
  Like Orpheus learns from the sad eyes of beasts,
Falls from Heaven's height on doomed daedalian wings,
  And sits in catacombs at banned love-feasts,
A wasting way he wanders, soon and late,
Until through ecstasy repatriate.

THE WIZARD OWL

WILFRID GIBSON

From furrows newly ploughed,
With chitterings and caws
Rooks, starlings and jackdaws
Rose in one murky cloud
Above dark Oakenshaws—

Rose in one murky cloud
That streamed like bonfire smoke
Over the groves of oak;
Then each clan from the crowd
As at one signal broke:

While rooks with drowsy caws
Flapped to their rookery,
And towards the Western sea
Flew home cliff-roosting daws,
Still screaming crazily

Starlings in every oak
Perched; and in fading light
Fell mute, and quiet night
That not an echo woke
Of all that noisy flight

Possessed for a brief pause
The earth, till eerily
The owl screeched, and each tree
Of haunted Oakenshaws
Stood tranced by wizardry.

MIDSUMMER: BEFORE MIDNIGHT

FRANCES CORNFORD

This ship, this moon,
This miracle of light
Coming to pass
Behind the mounded trees;
This width of grass
Unmortal as the seas;
This sculptured night;
This promise of majesty—
To what do all invite?
What secrecy?
How soon?
They call our noiseless footsteps to pass through
What avenue?
Towards what too-ancient rite?

ALL SOULS' EVE

R. H. MOTTRAM

No matter how long dead I have been
I shall return on that sweet autumn night
When stillness listens, and great clouds careen
Across the expectant moon's suffused light

And all my ancient gossips unforgot
Shall throng familiar streets and swift devise
The greeting word, hands cherishing, a knot
Of nodding heads and faces kindly wise.

Death cannot sever friendship, loves, accords.
Only hates, coldnesses and strife can die,
For we are of one body, linked by words,
And, as one body, dwell eternally.

AT THE DAY'S END

JOHN REDWOOD ANDERSON

In the still fields of consciousness
I walk when day is done;
When from life's city walled about
My soul is free to wander out:
Walk in a quiet mood, or sit
Beside the stream, scarce seeing it,
As in slow tranquil loveliness
It winds beneath the sun.

Then am I free to let my mind
Roam after its desire:
Go on that road that towards the west
Points beckoning with all unrest;
Go towards that undiscovered thing
That fills the day with questioning,
And now—remote, and sad, and blind—
Calls through the sun's last fire.

And thoughts, like running messengers,
Come from the west and pass;
I watch for news: but, as they run,
Catch but a breathless word from one—
From one, a look of startled fears—
From one, a face of blessed tears . . .
And they are fled: a flower-bell stirs;
Wind dies along the grass.

And the sun dies; and, like a sea,
Pale light spreads infinite;
Sadly I seek, before night fall,
The safety of the city wall;
Fear drives me, and I turn my back
In sorrow on the thing I lack:
And have not known what it might be,
Nor heard the name of it.

PURBECK SCENE

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

How many hearts have wandered
Here where I
Ponder the scarred division
Of the sky
Where treeless barrows stand
And winter flings
Skeins of ambiguous light
On pools and springs?

How many souls have perished
Here where I
Cherish the thought deep hidden
Where they lie,
Where cobwebbed chambers run
Through crumbling seams
Bat-hung in solitude,
Emptied of dreams?

How many minds have pondered
Here where I
Squander the last day-glimmer
Of the sky,
As moaning seagulls wheel,
While bush and scar
Falter in night, unlit
Even by one star?

THUS SPAKE SEX

THOMAS MOULT

The song I sing is sweeter than the song of birds
. . . And harsher than the hunger cry of trampling herds.
My heart is lighter than the clouds that leap the moon
. . . And heavier than the storm that cleaves the hot gold hush
of noon.
The vision of mine eyes is clearer than the frost of early day on forest
branches
. . . And blinder than the valley-choking mist of avalanches.

Long, long ago my mighty travellings began.
Mankind was not my quest. Before the birth of Man
Fired one dim beacon on the thousand plains of Time
I reached a thousand ultimates. On, on, for ever on I climb.

On, on, for ever on, I tread the worlds. I plough deep waters. There,
behold,
Except for me the fishes don no coloured skin, no cloak of gold.
The stars grow pale unless I press upon a human thought.
I bring all radiance to the earth. Without me night is naught
Beyond the end of day. Because a woman's lips
Are red, men build proud cities, lovely ships.

Even the gods have I endowed. Stronger than any god am I.
Lost in my purpose are the ends they live for. I live eternally.
What wonder men have called me holy, beautiful! They fear my ways,
Loathe me, deny me, yet—hark to the voices lifted in my praise!

See! Yonder comes an empty world,
Hurtling through space, as barren as a stone!
I touch, I tread, and lo, a million lives awaken, lost and found in lust and love: a Babel whispers, music sounds, bright flags of birth are unfurled! . . .
And so, triumphantly, I wander on:
I shout, and wander on.

REMEMBERING HOW SHE LOOKED

MONK GIBBON

Now have I all, the very way
Her gaze met mine, the eyes alight
With wonder and swift questioning,
The sudden smile of grave delight,
That hair swept back; the round and proud
Young forehead, fit abode to hold
Truths deeper than the ones she asked,
Thoughts wiser than the ones I told.
A moment since and all was mine,
Come to me and within my reach;
Now I have nought, but words, pale words,
And that vain echo—empty speech.

THE UNGUARDED HEART

WRENNE JARMAN

In Nature, all that's weak
And soft and vulnerable,
Has horn or scale or shell
To compensate physique,—
Do you who find a snail
Without its carapace,
Return to some green place
That needs no saving mail?

Man has his shell—his knit
    Steel armour and cuirass,
    His studded shield of brass,
His vizor sparsely slit.
Alone, the unguarded heart,
    With no defensive trick
    To sheathe the tender quick,
Must self-inure to smart.

Be gentlest with the young,
    Their plate not yet devised—
    The great uncircumcised
Whose vitals must be wrung:
And those whose calvaries
    Of pain are changed and freed
    In images that bleed,
In symbols that are cries.

TRUTH

BRIAN MERRIKIN HILL

Ultimately there is truth only in simple statements:
in Autumn the leaves fall; I love you; we shall die.
Ultimately there is comfort only in simple actions:
the impulsive caress, laughter, the urge to cry.

Really we long to give one gift, and only
hope for a simple exchange; but man has made
his life a twisted tower, where indirectly
he wanders proudly and vainly, or cowers afraid.

There was a road to joy once, but ingeniously
we constructed a maze, forgetting to keep the plan.
Heard voices cannot be traced now: inevitably
we have established the loneliness of man.

Can you not hear, laughter to which I listen,
how in my deathly corridor I cry,
asking for simple action by simple statement,
"In Autumn the leaves fall. I love you. We shall die"?

VISION

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

A century ago I think she paused,
My ancestress, a child, in the orchard's stillness
Of April mist, the candid blackbird singing,
And the warm smell of fruit blossom and rain.
Her skirt was drenched with dew, she put one hand
On the gnarled apple trunk, and wondered why
When all was happiness, her heart should droop?
Not knowing all the sorrow of the unborn
Laid its chill there, and that, so far ahead
In time, her childrens' heart would feel the full
Load of pain whose shadow now she bore.

LETABA

TERENCE HEYWOOD

Tell, are the scenes that enlivened our friendship
As splendid as ever, as breathlessly beautiful?
Screeches the parakeet still in the thicket?
The crocodile loves he the banks as of yore?
And the water-sow grunts she in haste through the kaffir-corn,
Tusking a way for her retinue squealing?
Do spiders hang heavy and large on their webs
With such colours as joyed us? Pekenimmakaka,
The little grey monkey, still chases he playmates
On riverside branches with fruits overbent?
And possesses the fine-antlered kudu that bearing
Which made us agree that the low veldt no worthier
Beast could inhabit;—till back on the scent of him,
Massive, the muscular lion appeared?

O! how the splendour of friendship encircles
And glorifies ever those scenes; for the thought of them
Runs through my trellis of days like wistaria.

OBSTINATE IN NON-ATTENDANCE

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Obstinate in non-attendance I cannot but think kindly
Of the county of Hampshire, my nurse: she is sluttish but not uncomely:
Sociable in London my heart is a parched forest
And my skull a stone tower where the songs not easily nest.

But she who fostered my first cares and my loneliness,
Indifferent yet received them with a certain homeliness;
My tears hardly augment the griefs that in Thames must run
But could add a saltness to the Stour's, or the Avon's urn.

The Celt rants in my blood; but it is of Winchester
The Saxon monarchs who lift up a golden sceptre
To rule in all my dreams with a plain jurisdiction,
Though my ancestors rowed Edgar the Peaceable on Severn.

Or striving in my verse to acclimatise the Italian myrtle
And the Greek cyclamen, I sometimes feel it is futile:
The yellow gorse the coltsfoot and the rest-harrow
Are nourished by the clay and sand that fed my earliest sorrow.

IN MEMORY OF AN AIRMAN

REX TAYLOR

You left so suddenly; Threw down your book:
Glanced at your watch; reached helmet, goggles, map
Into your hands, and from them swiftly shook
The sand. Stood for bare seconds by the flap;
Then opened it, casting your shadow back.
It strayed across your bed, long, lean and black.

And eighteen summers of you went away.
I stood and watched the glitter of your wing
Fade into loneliness inside the day,
Sad that the sand should be your covering.

Glad that they came and moved you from my mind;
Took all your things and mine, and closed the door.
Still there remained the shade you left behind:
Just as the spirit of you went before.

SUNDAY MORNING IN THE CITY

ALEXANDER HENDERSON

Who have survived? The living or the dead?
Am I the ghost or those who walked this street,
spoke in this square two hundred years ago?

They see the rusted cistern flung by war
upon a heap of bricks where wild flowers grow;
they see the hollowed houses cracked like egg-shells
thrown on a garbage pile, their purpose gone;
they hear the summer wind that drags the torn
poster, slaps it on a railing, and turns
to shake the herb-willow and the long grasses;
they hear the unlatched door within the house
that thumps and thumps again with every draught,
till Monday bring the early typist's hand
to still the lonely door's insensate bark.

They hear my steps, observe my wandering gaze
that finds the centuries so glassy thin,
and only marks surprise at my strange self
standing and staring, puzzled now, among us.

The sunlit silence trembles like faint water
of mirage seas, deceiving ghosts and me.

ANYTHING GOD CAN DO ...

ARTHUR CADDICK

I hold this instrument and master space.
There is no fission in the Antipodes,

No hostile movement in the underseas,
But I, I mark it in its indexed place.

The mind has Geiger-counters of its own.
I sat alone and heard a voice one day.
Then came her call, a kingdom's length away.
But we had spoken ere we touched the phone.

Show me a mountain. I will flick my wrist
And it shall fall in dust upon the ground.
No memory of its contours to be found,
Save in the case-books of a scientist.

A mountain lives, compact of teeming life,
A continent of creatures and their needs,
A multiform of rock and earth and seeds—
Have you made a mountain lately for your wife?

I have machined a type of engined ant.
It walks, it sees, it speaks, it hears, it writes,
Conditioned to my currents and my lights.
Its tyrant I, and it my sycophant.

Give me a mirror, I will test its wits.
It looks. It sees itself. It looks again.
O will it laugh, and laugh itself insane,
Or weep and break its metal heart to bits?

SWALLOWS

ROB LYLE

The swallows from the deep south are returning.
  Over the foaming flower-waves of May,
Until my heart too seeks the azure, burning
  To steal migrating wings and fly away!
To fly to where the Rhône rolls like green thunder
  Beneath the blue madonna-cloak of day:
To where the feathered fountains rustle under

The dark whose midnight lawns have stars for dew—
With all the fields aglow with the sun's plunder
Where angels of fertility bestrew
The bridal earth with wild-flowers of confetti
The sacrament of springtide to renew!
To hear the amorous sea caress the jetty,
Or in the hills above the Umbrian plain
To lie amid the mortal *fioretti*
That bring their master to the mind again.
O bitter birds, you're slower than my thought
Which leaves my heart behind to nurse its pain
And with unspeakable desire distraught
Soars wingless as the wind whose sad voice calls
Insistent with the passion that it caught
(The music of the streams, the leaves, the falls)
From stroking the guitar-strings of the pine.
For in the drumming of your wings I hear
The bells that clamour in an air like wine,
Whose sound the heart to reverie recalls
From lazy feasting underneath the vine!
I see those dawns, inviolate and sheer:
The sullen silence of the noon-day heat:
How over Arles the skies are towering clear:
Over the Var how midnight stoops to meet
The Alps in their cloud-scattering career.
I smell the hills with thyme and myrtle sweet,
Where the mimosa kindles by the sea:
I know how in soft languor from the rail
Of each star-moored and floating balcony,
The clematis and bougainvillea weep:
I know the cypress hoists its dusky sail
And round the bay the pine stoops longingly
To kiss its vibrant image in the deep:
That, there, Desire retires behind her veil
And even Care can close her eyes and sleep.

ERNEST DOWSON—FIFTY YEARS LATER

BY RICHARD WHITTINGTON-EGAN

It was only on the hill-top that the mist of time cleared and I was at last able to make contact with Ernest Dowson. There at least, though time did not diminish, it seemed static and space divided us in mensurable terms of a mean six feet.

Exactly fifty years had passed since the grey February day when the black-plumed hearse had toiled up the long hill to Lewisham's Ladywell Cemetery and the wasted corpse of the young poet had been "but freshly buried in the white marble forest of a suburban cemetery". Here, on a dull February afternoon when tears quivered upon the low cloud brinks, I stood, silently remembering the strange, tragic young man in the plain wooden coffin beneath the winter-weathered cross.

Upon the weeds there lay a wreath of laurels—a tardy recognition in death of one whom life racked, starved, and tortured into greatness, laid by Mr. John Gawsworth and eleven subscribers "on behalf of Dowsonians everywhere" upon the fiftieth anniversary of his death—and, appropriately enough, a pathetic little posy of the poet's beloved violets.*

How many of the teeming myriads who worked and worried, lived and loved at the hill-foot knew anything of the man who lay so silent in the Kentish clay? Yet his words are upon the lips of thousands the world over, and though he died virtually a pauper in a dingy Catford terrace-house, he left a legacy of immortal word-melody which has enriched the pages of anthologies and provided a source of inspiration for his brothers of the lyre for more than half a century. His love poem *Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae* is to-day a treasured favourite not only in England, but also in America and has inspired books, plays and films. The line:—

"I have forgot much, Cynara, gone with the wind."

was the source of a novel title of such world-wide repute that the reader will require no reminding of it.

But fame is a strange, an almost ethereal, quality and while his work lives on it would seem that Dowson himself is forgotten. He is a frail phantom, a thing of gauze and gossamer, hovering in the background of our consciousness, a tragic young figure from the time-crimped pages of *The Yellow Book;* a pallid, bright-eyed consumptive of the "Legendary Poet School", who flits, a glittering May-fly of a day, across the gloom of

*This essentially private ceremony, which coincided with General Election Day, (the second ceremony at the graveside inaugurated by the Dowson Society), was attended by several distinguished members of the Poetry Society, including The Hon. Philip Inman, Mr. E. H. W. Meyerstein, Mr. Thomas Moult, Mr. John Waller, and Mr. Jon Wynne-Tyson. Among subscribers to the wreath who were unable to be present was the President of the Poetry Society, Mr. T. W. Ramsey.—Ed.

the swift-receding horizon of the "Gay (God forgive the irony of the adjective!) Nineties".

His story has all the beauty and inherent tragedy of the finest work of the artist. It is at once commonplace and unique. Therein lies the essence of its fearfulness.

He was born in 1867 of respectable parents, whose sun of fortune was rapidly setting. Childhood was for him the little Kentish village of Lee. Of conventional schooling he had none, for his father was for ever ailing and made an annual pilgrimage to Apollo's winter court in Southern France. From a succession of foreign tutors the young Ernest received erratic tutelage in a wide variety of subjects. When in 1886, he entered the solid citadel of academics at Oxford, his scholastic attainments were of a dubious nature. When he departed thence, in March 1888, his achievements remained unassessed and uncertified.

Unprepared for the professions, unequipped financially for a life of leisure, he went to London and became a clerk at his father's dry-dock in Limehouse. The bonds of book-keeping irked him; the confines of clerkship irritated him; he was the frustrated slave of unsympathetic circumstance. He took refuge in laughter and dubbed himself "the intellectual docker", but the laughter echoed hollowly in the soul of the artist and he yearned for freedom. When the long day ended and the golden rays of the westering sun crept across the creaking wooden floor, the spluttering quill was tossed away and he left the now silent riverside to the watchmen and the gulls and followed eagerly in the wake of the red sun, westwards towards the million yellow orbs of the city's lamp-lit night.

There, life pulsed along the cobbled arteries and he exulted in the sensation of being a part of the sport and spilth of existence. In full heart he moved from tavern to tavern and became initiate in the mysteries of "Absinthia Taetra". "Green changed to white, emerald to an opal" but in its fiery iridescence he saw nothing of red, nothing of danger, only the dazzling, whirling poison-pattern of a perilous beauty and the white mist, not of purity, but of vapid obscurity. The dull, colourless water of life dripped through the sugar and was suffused with a brief, oil-film brilliance and "nothing was changed".

At the "Crown" on Charing Cross Road he met other poets, painters and literary men; other members of the doomed generation. Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, Lionel Johnson, Max Beerbohm, Will Rothenstein, Charles Conder, Richard Le Gallienne and the rest. He drank and dreamed, dreamed and drank, and all the while he wrote poem after poem and kept careful books at the mouldering old dock-house.

He joined the "Rhymers' Club" and attended their meetings in that panelled upper room on the first floor of the "Cheshire Cheese" where the members smoked their long clay pipes and recited their verses to each

other over ample mugs of ale. For a time he seemed happy, but the disaster of his destiny was almost upon him.

In 1891 he had met a young girl of twelve whose parents owned a little restauraunt in Soho where he was a frequent diner. By the autumn of 1892 he was deeply in love with the child. It was fantastic, absurd; his friends tried to dissuade him from the pursuit of this whimsical passion but he remained obdurate. Hope and despair alternated within his heart for five taut-nerved years until, in September 1897, the loved one married the waiter.

With the death of hope Dowson abandoned himself to that craving for drink which tainted his blood as surely as the consumption which finally killed him. He disappeared from his old haunts and strayed from the orbit of his friends.

He went to France. But France or London it was always the same, the scene made no difference, the tempo of his anguish was invariable. Haunted by the memories of an old love which still entwined his heart, he wandered miserably about a world bereft of meaning; he wandered hand-in-hand with the living ghost of a dead love. "Green changed to white, emerald to an opal", the glass was empty, the marble table-top was sticky, the white mist clung about the wrought-iron legs, dissolved and "nothing was changed".

In 1899 he returned to England and his death.

He took lodgings in a wretched garret on the Euston Road. How he occupied his time it is difficult to say. Old friends saw nothing of him. A shabby, nameless ghost he passed unknown among the city's millions. Doubtless he ate at the Cabmen's shelters, always a favourite resort, and drank at a variety of lesser known taverns. Beyond these reasonable suppositions "the rest is silence". One day, in the late December of 1899, he was discovered by his friend Robert Sherard in a public house in Bedford Street. He had only a few shillings in his pocket and seemed desperately ill. He was, moreover, on the verge of starvation. Sherard it was, who took him to his home, the shabby little house at Catford, where, on the 23rd February 1900, he died.

It is in the nature of the irony of fate that the works of the man who died with but a few coppers in the pocket of his frayed coat, should command to-day sums which would have seemed majestic to their impoverished author. I found only five first editions of his books in all London and the price of each of these was to be reckoned in guineas.

But Dowson's London has changed. The old Bridge Dock, where he spent so many captive hours, is no more. The room at the "Cheshire Cheese", where once the Rhymers revelled, was burned out in the airborne inferno of the late war, though I found a curious link with Dowson in the feathered shade of "Polly", his contemporary, which the taxider-

mist's art has snatched a while from the destructive hand of time. The little *café* in Sherwood Street, where Dowson met the girl who won his faithful, fatal love, has been swept away by the builders, as has his garret close by St. Pancras Church. I did, however, locate the erstwhile "Cock Bar" on Shaftesbury Avenue. The old premises were purged in the second fire of London. Rebuilt and renamed "The Avenue Bar", they have nothing of Dowson about them. Gone is the marble-topped table, on which he managed to compose *Cynara* in defiance of the over-zealous barman who contrived periodically to wipe the pencilled stanzas off its surface with the absinthe overflow, and in its place stands only the twisted utility of an age which confounds the barren with the simple.

Even at Catford my quest for Dowson failed. Not only was it impossible to discover the house in which he died, but the very road seemed to have passed "into the drear oblivion of lost things." It was only on the hill-top, in grey eminence and the seeming perpetuity of the evergreens, that I found Ernest Dowson, the elusive spirit of the brief high noon of *fin de siècle* London.

FRANCE IN THE HEART

PETER HELLINGS

For M.

France in the heart and on the tongue no French
How can I ever start talking of her
Whose music I've not sung, singing I love her
Gaily profound, naked reticent wench
A man could win like a sweep with a bare bunch
Of tulips, laughing no guile, who'll show her
Delight in the right words, and go to lunch,
Dreaming no less and no more—
how can I know her
France,
naive nude ironical friend,
Living loaves and loves, red wine to taste
Painter's palette, speech of a poet, stung
To abandon, and, dishonoured, chaste,
How can I ever start singing or end
France in the heart, and no French on the tongue?

A HUNTINGDONSHIRE POEM

BY E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

One day in 1919 I walked into the Poetry Bookshop, then in Devonshire Street, and picked up a small volume called *Poems and Rhymes* just published by Sidgwick and Jackson;* the author, Miles Jeffery Game Day, a Flight-Commander in the naval air-service and an intrepid person, clearly enamoured of the craft of flying, had been shot down, just over twenty-one, in the February of the preceding year by six enemy aircraft, attacked single-handed, out to sea, meeting his death before an award of the Distinguished Service Cross had been gazetted. The delightful prefatory memoir (signed E. H. Y., i.e. E. Hilton Young, later Lord Kennet of the Dene) told one that, and also something of his character and likings. He appeared to be one of those simple direct young people, who are troubled by life until they find some object (in his case the air) that absorbs their entire selves. Born at St. Ives of a family "settled for generations on the banks of the Ouse", he had been educated at Repton, where, according to an article in *The Reptonian* for July 1919 nobody would ever have described him as poetical, but as a runner, a swimmer, a "good fellow" with a keen interest in nature and natural history. The portrait in photogravure showed a profile like an ancient bronze. I have seen a Roman-Egyptian statuette of Harpocrates, the god of silence, somewhat resembling it, but without the patient humorous eyes with their latent fire. "You are buying the book for *that*", came the voice of Harold Monro, the proprietor, to whom I tendered the price of it. "No", said I, not a little taken aback by the suggestion, where *poetry* was concerned, "but rather for this", pointing to the lines in the first piece, "An Airman's Dream":

> a country very deeply blessed
> because its sunsets are the best.
> There sturdy, sad-eyed fenmen toil,
> tilling the heavy, rich-brown soil;
> a land where the grey heron breeds,
> and wild fowl paddle in the reeds;
> a land of molten golden reds,
> of ripening corn, and osier beds.

Such a simple distillation of marshland scenery did not suit Monro; he said the poem would not have existed but for "Grantchester", which is what its author says. I took the little book home and found (I can only put it like this) that I had a friend for life, one whom I had never known or even seen.

*Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., to whom thanks are due for permission to quote from the poems and memoir, inform me that the book is still obtainable from them.

Milton's observation in *An Apology for Smectymnus* that a poet ought to be himself a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things, was, I felt, illustrated by the despatch cited in the memoir:

> "He hit the enemy and they hit his machine, which burst into flames; but, not a bit flurried, he nose-dived, flattened out, and landed perfectly on the water. He climbed out of his machine and waved his fellow-pilots back to their base; being in aeroplanes [not seaplanes], they could not assist him."

Here is one of those happenings, before the era of the parachute or dinghy, where, like Sidney's death, poetry is somehow visibly revealed in human guise, if indeed that last gesture might not be described as Keats'

> Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu

transmuted into terms of heroic action.

The specific quality of Day's verse is its sincerity and complete freedom from cleverness and artifice. This may seem to some making a mountain out of a mole-hill, for only one piece, the lines "To my Brother", his last work, is absolutely first-rate, but *quality* is the issue here, and much the same might be said of another poet of this period, Julian Grenfell. In fact I will go so far as to say that Day should be remembered by this poem of ninety-two lines alone, and a handful of lines from the others, many of the "Rhymes" being hardly more than Gilbertian patter to amuse the mess-room. It starts with a poignant resignation that, in its movement, is nearer Catullus' *Si qua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas* (LXXVI) than anything I know in English:

> At first, when unaccustomed to death's sting,
> I thought that, should you die, each sweetest thing,
> each thing of any merit on this earth,
> would perish also, beauty, love, and mirth:
> and that the world, despoiled and God-forsaken,
> its glories gone, its greater treasures taken,
> would sink into a slough of apathy
> and there remain into eternity,
> a mournful-minded, soul-destroying place
> wherein there would be seen no smiling face,
> where all desire to love and live would cease,
> and death would be the only way to peace.
> And when one day the aching blow did fall
> for many days I did not live at all,
> but, dazed and halting, made my endless way
> painfully through a tangled growth of grey

and clinging thorns, dismal, towards belief,
and uncontrollable, heart-racking grief . . .

This brother was a real person, D. I. Day, who rowed in the Cambridge boat in 1914 and died in September 1915 of wounds received in the battle of Loos. The two, with a third still surviving, were often shooting and fishing together. Youth here is mourning youth. This is a personal and heartfelt elegy, not the highly stylized lament of a poet for the passing of his own prime like Brooke's threnody "Funeral of Youth". The elegist decides that it is "a far more noble thing" *not* to forget the past but, when peace comes, "to do again the things that we held dear". Then comes a description of the Huntingdonshire Ouse comparable to Cowper's account of it at Olney:

Crouched in the brittle reed-beds wrapped in grey
I'll watch the dawning of the winter's day,
the peaceful, clinging darkness of the night
that mingles with the mystic morning light,
and graceful rushes, melting in the haze,
while all around in winding water ways
the wild fowl gabble cheerfully and low
or wheel with pulsing whistle to and fro . . .
and the slow, throbbing, red, distorted sun
reaches the sky, and all the large mists run . . .
And then, maybe, some whispering near by,
some still, small sound as of a happy sigh
shall steal upon my senses, soft as air,
and, brother I shall know that thou art there.*

So only will the poet be

comforted by the blissful certainty
and sweetness of thy splendid company . . .
proving thy presence near, in spite of death.

There is nothing *literary* in this. Except for the biblical reference in the "still, small, sound" and a faint breath from Tennyson's "Little breezes dusk and shiver" in a passage not quoted, it is all a decoction from nature inspired by intense and affectionate observation. The same can be said of the charming twenty-three line metrical caprice "The Mill", where with only two rhyme sounds, "mill", and "early" the happy noise and bustle of water and machinery are captured with a humorous precision. The poems on flying seem to have been written in response to a direct request; they have all the excitement and imperturbability that one would expect from the first man to ascend in a Scout on the top of a giant bombing-machine, and to fly off the back of the bombing-machine in mid air (I am citing the entry in the Repton School Register, which I owe to Mr. B. H. Kemball-Cook), i.e. "the pleasure of being the absolute master

*The printed text reads: 'thou are there.'

of every turn and twist", the horror of the dawn-raid ("I hate the dawn, as dogs hate soap"), and the exquisite joy of a perfect landing ("On the Wings of the Morning"):

I glide with slackening speed across the ground,
and come to rest with lightly grating sound.

Only a born poet could have written that last line.
The stanzas on the North Sea are effective in a Thomas Campbell way and contain this striking image:

Nothing at all in sight
save the mast of a sunken trawler,
fighting her long, last fight
with the waves that mouth and maul her.

and those on Leave, with that of the young officer dreaming that there was no war as he lies in his "long-grassed glade", are fragrant without being definitely localised.

And is this all? Can a naive unsophisticated raw talent such as this vindicate its right to poetic honours? I can only affirm that on the strength of "To my Brother" I regard this singer not only as a poet of Huntingdonshire, where, it is often said, the best English is spoken, but as an English poet of unmistakable pathos and power.

RUTH PITTER, POET OF LONELINESS

BY PATRICIA LEDWARD

In Chelsea, that land of opposites where the scholar and the dilettante, the successful civil servant and the artist manqué pass each other in the street, a table is laid for tea in a large-windowed room. There is home-baked bread, smelling as sweet as a baker's shop in the early morning, home-made cake, butter that has come from the country, damson jam. A fire burns in the grate and there is the scent of thorn wood burning: the cold, amethyst light of early spring slants into the room. It is a room in which to work and to plan, a homely room and at the same time an austere and scholarly room, a room in which to talk and dream and get to know the subleties of another's nature. It is a room suffused with the personality of the woman who inhabits it and who now enters carrying a generous tea pot and glancing round with humorous blue eyes to see that everything is in order—the order that satisfies her clear, poised mind. This is the woman who wrote:—

If you came to my secret glade,
Weary with heat,
I would set you down in the shade,
I would wash your feet.

If you came in the winter sad,
Wanting for bread,
I would give you the last that I had,
I would give you my bed.

But the place is hidden apart
Like a nest by a brook,
And I will not show you my heart
By a word, by a look.

She is a woman who combines the sturdy virtues of a homemaker with the shrewd and indefatigable qualities of a successful business woman, a woman with the coiled, shell-like hearing of a poet and the loving, unsentimental eye of an artist. She has trained herself to perceive the rare shades that most of us miss as we hurtle along, dazed by the crude colours of posters. She can see the colour within the colour, the nuances within the greys and duns and browns:

For the rose-duns and the blue-duns, look to the finches,
For the clean, clear brown duns, to the fallow deer,
(How the sudden tear smarts in the eye wearied of cities);
And for all these and more to the many toadstools,
Which alone have the violet dun, livid yet lovely:
But the most delicate duns are seen in the gentle
Monkeys from the great forests, the sylvan spirits.

This verse might almost be a lesson on colour and the art of seeing by an infinitely patient observer of the natural world. It is not surprising to learn that Ruth Pitter has earned a substantial living by the art of decoration.

With her partner, Kathleen O'Hara, she has worked up a prosperous business in the decoration of trays, glass, plastics and *petits meubles* such as coffee tables and so on. In pre-war times they employed more than a dozen people, and found it difficult to keep pace with orders, which came from shops all over the country. Now they don't employ anyone but do the best they can themselves. Demand for their work is still in excess of the supply. She says this daily work takes up every bit of energy bar the merest dregs: with these dregs she writes poetry. One marvels at the source of energy that is pure and strong enough, even in its exhausted dregs, to create poetry.

With poets, and perhaps with women poets in particular, there is usually some dominating quality that stands out among the conglomeration of influences and impulses that compose creative inspiration. For instance, with Emily Brontë it is her aloofness and her spiritual courage, with Christina Rossetti her religion, with Emily Dickinson her metaphysical curiosity, with Elizabeth Barrett Browning the love she felt for

her husband. Ruth Pitter's strongest inspiration is perhaps the world of natural phenomena, of comets and rivers and vine leaves and the great shadow of time darkening all things in their turn. But it is not the moody face of nature alone that engrosses her. She is a true nature-mystic. She sees more than she can ever express; she knows more than she understands; she can only give utterance to a hundredth part of all that she sees and feels:

> No matter what the body felt,
> No matter what it saw,
> My inmost spirit ever knelt
> In a blind love and awe.
>
> And dead or living knows full well,
> Sick or whole it knows,
> The secret it may never tell
> Of joy and of repose.

This is a dual mysticism—outward to the moving, time-haunted world, inward to the lonely, dark hermitage of the self. She is a poet of a rare and delicate loneliness, reflecting mood, emotion and thought like a pool reflects the sky.

> Hate me or love me, I care not as I pass
> To those hid citadels,
> Where in the depth of my enchanted glass
> The changeless image dwells.

Both her parents were school teachers. She was born fifty years ago at Ilford, Essex, in one of those red, surburban villas that look as though they are separated from poetry and genius by infinite space. In those days Ilford was only the beginning of a suburb. Patches of countryside were still the home of small wild animals, houses retained the graciousness of the landscape. But even in those early days it was remarkable for its priggish respectability and for its extraordinary monotony of social types: anyone who was the slightest bit of a person appeared disproportionately important.

In her childhood there were two escapes from this anxious respectability, from the timidness of life behind the rigid facade, from the dreary imitation of others not daring to step out beyond the conventional pattern.

One was into a wild tract of forest, a tract of real primeval forest. It was known as Hainault Forest: part was old timber and part open downland. It has been said that the forests of Epping and Hainault contain the only hornbeam woods of any extent in Europe. This was a place of miracles and of unlimited romantic possibilities for the Pitter children of whom Ruth was the eldest. On fine Saturdays the family would take a

picnic to this wonderful place and the children would play and fight and laugh and go on exciting voyages of exploration, terrified in case they met fierce boys or gamekeepers or strange woodland creatures. For many years they rented an old cottage there; comfortless and shabby as it was, they felt it was much more "home" than the prim surburban villa.

The other path of escape led into the world of the imagination, rich beyond the limits of possibility, rich because of the material poverty of her early life and the lack of spiritual robustness in her environment. This vital and compelling imagination found shape in two forms: in the stories she told to her young brothers and sisters, and in poetry. Ruth Pitter was barely five when, sitting on a step with a sad heart and tears in her eyes, she wrote an elegaic verse about a deserted windmill that she had seen. Later she wrote a scroll of Sea Songs on a huge piece of rolled up wall-paper.

Her poems are so shapely, so exact and economical and often so dazzling that the reader would imagine that she worked on them and polished them as minutely as a lapidary works on a diamond. This is not the case: at least the revision and the sharpness is not a conscious process. Once a poem has been written she seldom, if ever, re-touches it. She says that it is useless to compose poems consciously: they occur in the form of a mood, out of which phrases slowly crystallise and a rhythm becomes apparent. It is amazing that her poems are all spontaneous in this manner: they are so rich with images, the epithets are exact, the rhythm unfaltering. The view she takes of her gifts is humble. "No credit can be claimed by the poet," she says. "The faculty is a gift of nature." Her range is wide—lyrical and satirical, humorous and straight, rude and delicate.

Her education was sufficient. An elementary school when she was five and from which she used to enjoy playing truant. A secondary school at Bow when she was eleven or twelve. When the furies came to devastate the world in 1914 she was seventeen and went straight into war service, into the income tax department of the War Office. This work continued for two years, until, seriously debilitated with war food and conditions she left.

The shelter and beauty of Walberswick, in Suffolk, revived her. There, working for sympathetic people, she learned the use of wood-working tools and the A.B.C. of painting, thus laying the foundations for her future business. She thinks that working with the hands is the only sensible way to earn a living: it calms the mind while "brainwork" inflames and irritates it.

During the recent war she worked in a local factory, a damp and dirty place. Consolation she found in her workmates; their generosity, courage and humour made her love them.

And now? What future for this shy and rare poet, with her undated

world of ruined houses and summer rain, of old country folk and unpredictable emotion, this retiring woman bound to the lonely muse who, with the innate grandeur of an aristocrat, says:

> I'll none of Time;
> I leave this place? This roof come down?
> This is a graveyard jest, a dream
> Too hard for rhyme:
> We'll laugh at it when we sit down
> Before God's Christmas fire, and tell
> Our tales of worms, and ghosts, and hell,
> That our eternal hearth securer seem.

Her life seems to turn again towards the country, perhaps recalling the happiness of the old forest near Ilford "there where the heart was at home". London is so rushed and intense. Country life is the best life—time to grow one's own food, leisure to stand and gaze. Her mother, who died in 1941, left her a little property in Essex, consisting of what was once an ale-house, with about an acre of garden, a field where she is planting a young orchard, some old farm buildings and a cottage. The floating population consists of relations and friends who fill every corner with talk, particularly when they have had something to drink.

And what of her hidden life, the invisible, firelike energy in which her poems crystallize like gems? Looking for an answer one comes to her poem "The Bridge" and there reads:

> Where is the truth that will inform my sorrow?
> I am sure myself that sorrow is not the truth.
> These lovely shapes of sorrow are empty vessels
> Waiting for wine: they wait to be informed.
>
> There is always a way for those who must go over:
> Always a bridge from the known to the unknown.
> When from the known the mind revolts and despairs
> There lies the way, and there we must go over.

POETRY IN AUSTRALASIA

9. KENNETH MACKENZIE (b. 1913)

BY PHILIP LINDSAY

The effect of Hugh McCrae in bringing to Australian poetry a passionate lyricism, transplanting European images so that now they have become a part of the Australian scene, can be felt in most of the poets that followed him, if only spiritually. Kenneth Mackenzie, however, is most truly McCrae's poetical son. That he is aware of this and is proud of the debt is shown by two poems being dedicated to the older man in *The Moonlit Doorway*.* This debt is not purely a technical one. Mackenzie is happiest with blank verse or the sonnet, forms not popular with McCrae. It rests in the spirit, with the vision of an earth both beautiful and pitiful, while the love of women, as with McCrae, is Mackenzie's favourite theme.

After reading his work one is not surprised to learn that he has published novels under the name of Seaford Mackenzie. There is much of the novelist to be found in his worried probing after motives, in his persistent seeking for the right words to make an image plain to the eye or a scene realistic. Deeply personal, he finds little time for philosophies or metaphysics or religion. Worried by humanity as human beings, not as a mass or as some vague spirit, he seeks continually to untangle his own and others' emotional perplexities, only to find himself baffled, troubled and unhappy. There is one poem, *Interregnum*—alas, too long to be quoted here save in snatches that can give small conception of the ecstasy and the pathos of the whole—which shows him at his best. He has met by chance a girl and is tantalised by the thought of time's passing, of how he and she who have known each intimately for one night must yet remain strangers.

> I had loved women all my life long
> and never doubted of my right to know them—
> never till now. I saw your face, and doubted.
> For in your eyes there is the speed of fear,
> brave though they are with women's luckless courage;
> and in your hands (when you read this, forgive me)
> there is the fatal fear of all your kind
> which, like a flying pleasure, woos desire.

* *The Moonlit Doorway* appeared in 1944. Previously, Mackenzie had written a narrative poem, *Our Earth*, 1937. Both books are published by Angus and Robertson, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, and 48, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1.

So I did doubt, alone and lonely afterwards,
robbed of your restless body's exercise,
robbed of your final depths of voice and mood,
barren after the moisture of your heat
that slaked in burning, and encouraged more
the thirst it seemed to quench. Your will was frantic
and without pleasure. That fever I caught
from your unhappy, impotent denials . . .

Such passion, he feels, cannot have been the result of accident, of a chance meeting on a moonlit night, and he remains tortured with memories, uncertain whether he should mourn or glory in his triumph, while appalled to believe that what had meant so much to him might have been to her merely the amusement of an idle hour.

You shall remember (by these words you shall
remember) that you stood above me then,
tense with brief silences, amazed at life
with such amazement as the hour deserved.
You shall remember, nor shall I forget,
your outstretched hand asking my own, to set
a sudden seal of peace upon us both—
a seal no sooner set than it was broken
by the thin moon, the dusk, the dark, the silence
and that great weight of thought and memory
your gesture put upon me.
Now let go,
release my hand, and stand, and do not turn
nor try to smile in times not made for smiling,
and I shall leave you at your ease at last,
not so unhappily as I have feared,
but with my own regret—with that for ever.

I have quoted largely from this longish poem because it is typically Mackenzie with his novelist's love of introspection and a clearly visualised scene. One cannot doubt, as often one doubts when reading poetry, that he has suffered these emotions, that the events he describes have happened to him personally, his images being often physical, as in this McCrae-like verse:

I should say Helen must have looked like you
on some such rainy afternoon as this,
when on her breast her lover's sweat, like dew,
mixed with her own, and salted every kiss.

Nor as in *Interregnum* does he always need the elbow-room of blank-verse but can express similar passion in the tight jacket of the sonnet:

In the black night that weighs upon my flesh
heavy as thunder, there is this consolation:
one day in the future I shall get my wish
and she the solace for her moods of passion.
One day—and with this thought I stave off night
in all its horror—we shall lie together
drowned in an earthy solitude of light,
our bodies joined in fine bold summer weather.
Then will be no more darkness, sweat, despair
such as this midnight's; no more dreams of death—
for in the burning twilight of her hair
my eyes will find their noon, my lips their breath
and she beneath me will be mine at last,
this anguish done, this night and hunger past.

Although primarily the poet of love, at times Mackenzie speculates on vaster and often more terrifying themes such as death and hatred, and he can be jolly amongst drinkers or tender in the nursery—one of his finest long poems, *A Fairy Tale,* is addressed to a child—but it is when he writes of love that he is at his greatest. There are occasions when he recalls Rupert Brooke, but while Brooke could write exquisitely, his emotions remained adolescent and the "you" of his poems takes on neither shape nor sex; wholly different is this with Mackenzie whose "you" can be seen and almost felt as a living woman. Tormented yet grimly determined to be gay, he struggles to avoid the tragedy that love must bring, only always to fail; so to conclude I feel it might be well to quote *The Price,* so symbolic is it of most of his work:

"What is your price?" I said; and you said "Love,"
knowing my heart was bankrupt; so I said
I would devise some other means to prove
my body fit to enter in your bed.

Love is so rare, and cast and coined so slowly,
that we have little even when we die,
since most is spent on passions false or lowly,
and not much rests to be remembered by.

Therefore, what you would take I cannot give:
my bankrupt heart is bitterly in debt,
and though my creditors permit me live
they neither press me nor let me forget.

Love I have given, squandered, spent so boldly
on worthless women, or unfriendly men,
that when you name your price, I answer coldly,
"God grant that I may never love again!"

EXPERIMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Stratton, a play in verse, by Ronald Duncan (Faber, 9s. 6d.)
The Mongrel and Other Poems by Ronald Duncan (Faber 8s. 6d.)
Recollections of the Gala by Nicholas Moore (Editions Poetry London Ltd. 7s. 6d.)
Prophesy to the Wind, a play by Norman Nicholson (Faber, 8s. 6d.)
The Glassblowers by Mervyn Peake (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 7s. 6d.)

Reviewed by P. D. CUMMINS

While poetry, according to publishers, has once again become almost unsaleable, it is freakish to a degree that fashion should veer so sharply in favour of the so-called poetic play. I use the words "so-called" advisedly, since of the four plays by poets now running in London, one is written in chopped-up prose (its few seconds of choric declamation an acute embarrassment), while another, *Stratton* by Mr. Ronald Duncan is so heavily melodramatic in character that its many fine passages of verse seem, as it were, out of context.

To quote from the blurb on the jacket of the printed edition of this play, Mr. Duncan has chosen to "abandon the complex metrical pattern" he used in *This Way to the Tomb!,* to discard "lyricism and fantasy", aiming at "making the poetry spring out of the action rather than decorate the action with poetry". Well and good, but—and it is an insurmountable "but"—if the action is not wholly wedded to the poetic element, the resultant progeny will be androgynous. *Stratton* suffers badly from these distortions, and, to make matters worse, we are never persuaded for a moment that the tragedy is inevitable. On the contrary, we feel that the horrors which pile up when the gifted, admirable Sir Cory is so unaccountably precipitated by a mere flick into the labyrinth of the mind diseased, could easily have been averted by a visit to the psychiatrist or even one glimmer of humour. The play, then, whichever way we look at it, is a failure, but let me say at once that it is a failure which shows great courage, since a lesser poet than Mr. Duncan would have been more than content to repeat the brilliant pattern of masque and anti-masque which won for him so deserved a success. As it is, he is boldly experimenting with new forms, and this can be seen even more clearly in *The Mongrel,* a collection of his verse also published by Faber. Every poem in this book gives the impression that he is not yet ready or willing to declare himself, that he is even anxious to excuse himself for that beauty which

he, as an individual poet, is capable of creating. Certainly I can think of no other reason for this Envoi to his moving and beautiful "Canzone":

"Now you can go, Canzone, in your suit
which I have made to your strict measurement
and precise arrangement
making my impatient heart fit
to your fixed limit;
Those who dress to please the fashion
may turn their arse to you; kick it with passion!"

If, however, Mr. Duncan is still in a transitional stage, Mr. Nicholas Moore has ceased to experiment, and with *Recollections of the Gala* has come into his own. Up till now, much of his verse has not only baffled but infuriated me; with this collection, he has converted me once and for all. In the majority of these poems the emotional and the intellectual are perfectly balanced, and while he is never easy, he is very much worthwhile. I like him least when he produces Mr. Prufrock under such aliases as Mr. Ullubux, Invento Fiske, Mr. Defresco, and so on; I like him best when he is characteristically himself, which is all that he needs to be; when, for instance, he reveals his bitter awareness of how desperately we are alone, even in the very act of love, as in "The Face":

"I did not know what it could be.
'I love, I love', I said and suited to
These words my actions, and she made reply
Generously as I would have her do;

And yet her face looked to me like a stone,
Round and smooth, featureless as my own."

as in "The Little Girl":

"O I tried hard to reach her mind,
Yet in her eye there was no glimmer . . . "

and again as in "In a Black Glass":

"O Fury! O round, white moons! O folds between!
I am familiar with the mirrored face,
So like my own, so blank reflected there,
Featureless, dark, lost in a darkling well."

These are poems to haunt with pity, but there are others spectral with terror:

"To-night, to-night, the grey rain falls
And O the hero in his shadow
Carries a monster that appals:
To-night may be the night of murder."

It is indeed a far cry from such an evocation as this to the wide sweep of the Cumberland fells which are the background of yet another poetic

play: Mr. Norman Nicholson's: *Prophesy to the Wind*. I dislike fantasies of the future; I don't want to flip over a couple of hundred pages of the history-book to discover that, in those two centuries, we have all reverted to the primitive life of our Viking forefathers. By every right, then, I should have hated a play dealing with so unpromising a theme; it is, therefore, a very genuine tribute to Mr. Nicholson's art when I say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. In the first place, it is unpretentious, never fussily poetic yet never prosy; in the second, the characters are vivid and appealing, and the natural drama that springs out of them gives, not only new life, but a new twist to an old, old plot. *Prophesy to the Wind* which is far less ambitious in conception than *The Cocktail Party* or *Stratton* is, within its chosen limits, far more satisfactory than either: it hits the centre of the mark at which it was aimed. It has already proved dramatically successful at the Questor's Theatre, and in the provinces; I hope Mr. Nicholson will give us the opportunity of seeing it in London.

Lastly we have another collection of verse: Mervyn Peake's *The Glassblowers*. These poems began to take shape after a war-time visit to a glass-blowing factory. "What I actually wrote," Mr. Peake explains, "was an attempt to give substance to the firelit flutter of words and images . . . a substance dependent in the first place upon the visual impression of jugglers in a world of grime and firelight". As is only to be expected from a poet who is also an artist, the poems in this book have a glowing, pictorial quality, and, both in their simplicity as in their complexity, they distil a little of the essence of an earlier poet-painter: Blake. "Grottoed Beneath Your Ribs Our Babe Lay Thriving" is a particularly successful fusion of simple and complex patterns: it is a pity that there is not sufficient space to print it in its entirety. The short poem that follows must serve as an example of Mervyn Peake's quality:

> "The vastest things are those we may not learn.
> We are not taught to die, nor to be born,
> Nor how to burn
> With love.
> How pitiful is our enforced return
> To those small things that we are masters of."

There are not so very many poets who can say as much, with such directness and with such effect, in half-a-dozen short lines.

FLOWERS OF SPEECH

A Pageant of English Verse by E. W. Parker (Longman's, 10s. 6d.)
The Poet's Progress by J. H. Jagger (Blackie, 9s. 6d.)
The Way to Poetry by E. Ellerington Herron (E.U.P., 10s. 6d.)
Great Poems by John Hampden (Pan Book, 2s.)

The Centuries Poetry 2, Donne-Dryden (Penguin, 1s. 6d.)
The Centuries Poetry 5, Bridges to Now (Penguin, 1s. 6d.)
Poems for Speaking by Richard Church (Dent, 7s. 6d.)
Orpheus II by James Reeves (Heinemann, 3s. 6d.)
Choose Again by J. A. Stone (Harrap, 4s. 6d.)
Victorian Byeways by Vera M. Snelling (Staples, 12s. 6d.)
New Athenian Broadsheets, Nos. 1-8 Editors, Edinburgh, 4s. 4d. for four, for one year.
Homage to Cheshire by Hedley Lucas (Sherratt, 7s. 6d.)
Cornish Chorus by Muriel Hawkey (Westaway, 10s. 6d.)
White Rose Garland by Wilfrid J. Halliday and Arthur S. Umpleby: (Dent, 16s.)
Rhodesian Verse by John Snelling (Blackwell, 10s. 6d.)
Poems in Praise of Cats by Hamilton Fyfe (Bannisdale Press, 3s. 6d.)
For Your Tomorrow (Geoffrey Cumberlege: O.U.P., 7s. 6d.)
These Years by Howard Sergeant (E. J. Arnold & Son, 4s. 6d.)
Samples by Edwards, Bratton, Hanow, Cole and Halsen (Fantasma, 3s. 6d.)

Reviewed by ARTHUR VIVIAN

"Anthology" has lost its original meaning as a Collection of Flowers of English Poetry; and what a garden from which to choose, gorgeous horticultural blooms of modern scientific culture, chosen specimens of lovely average blossoms, genetic freaks with nowt to back their claims to beauty or genius, and perhaps best of all and certainly the most fragrant, specimens of the Old English Flowers, common larkspur purple yet and not degenerated up to "delphiniums blue", Sweet William, mignonette, lupin heartsease and love-lies-bleeding and the lovely great common sunflower. We have it here to suit all tastes.

Mr. Parker's *Pageant* is rich in the last named (I like a poet's having an M.C. but find it out of place upon the title page), and it is ever welcome to have unfamiliar treasures fished from that deep sea. "Sumer is . . ." of course, and Chaucer, but then Lydgate, Skelton, Godwhen, too little known, and some lovely *Anon-s*—the lady-love "so Proper and so Pure", yclept "my pretty piggèsnie" (pig's eye!) and Dunbar's

"London, thou art of townes *A per se.*"

A fairly representative Elizabethan section (I always feel that we get too much Milton, too little Marvell and Vaughan, but here the choice is good) and an excellent modern section (my personal predilection for less of Burns and Tennyson and more Brontë, Clare, *Hound of Heaven* complete, and Hardy, is met by Mr. Parker). Five unhackneyed Yeats plus the lovely "old and gray", and four big known but perfect Brookes show sensitive selection. T.S.E. is happily confined to the "straight" *Magi* and the

Hollow Men which at least offers images. Two Osberts make one wonder why no Edith Sitwell, there is a beautiful V. Sackville-West, and one each from our not quite modernest.

Doctor Jagger's *Progress* (dedicated to the Laureate) is of interest as planting a theory based on division into seven "books", the last from 1910, with an admirable appendix of mid-Scots and mid-English—an excellent arrangement this, fine water to fish but swamping out the beginning of most collections, for instance the *Oxford Book*. Book I is a rich variant of Elizabethans, Book II overflows at both ends from 1625, and Book VII—conventional enough in its "Bridges to 1920"—is delightfully rich and varied thenafter: four perfect Edith Sitwells, Grenfell, Turner, two good Humbert Wolfe—all marred for me by Mister T. S. Eliot's Mystery Cat Macavity. This is the book I would best like alongside or instead of Q's *Oxford Book*.

Miss Herron's *Way to Poetry* is 700 solid pages introduced by Cecil Day Lewis, who points out that a poem by Wyatt or "Mr. Eliot" should lead us not to the poet's "school" or "background" but to other poems by Mr. Eliot or Wyatt; and points to a notable "quote" opposite the title page, from Charles Williams:—

> "Poetry is a good game—let us take it lightly. But it is also 'liberty and power'—let us take it seriously."

Miss Herron takes it seriously, but beautifully, and through the best of telescopes or glasses. The first 400 pages are lyrical—her telescope shows delicious Anne Askewe, Still ("back and side go bare, go bare", mostly unattributed); and unexpected poesy wrongly-attributed to Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (see Gawsworth's Preface to *The Poets of Merchant Taylors' School*) and that of Lyly (our ponderous Euphues). But it is particularly her moderns which delight me, from ample Meredith to a "Waste Land" Part IV, rich from Hopkins on to Cornford, Read, James Stephens, Day Lewis (unduly many) to end with Alun Lewis, Treece, Thomas and Keyes (all four too easily omitted). The final 300 pages are long narrative poems—an admirable way of treating them (long ballads wrecked the *O.B.E.V.*), and far less snippily treated than many of the lyrics.

Great Poems live up to their title and are advantageously portable and cheap: they are mostly great and good and cumulatively dull. Even Lord Rochester has been pulled in for a few "respectable" lines in philosophic vein.

Penguin *Donne to Dryden* is beautifully done, worth buying and binding. Phineas Fletcher, one of my Kingsmen and Ambassador brothers, appears with a charming *Women's Inconstancy:* Carew and Browne and Quarles, Randolph and Wither and Crashaw, from love-affairs to God ring nobly and novelly true. I had forgotten Burton's delightful *Song* anatomizing his own *Melancholie*. And pages of Milton and Cowley.

Bridges to Present Day is somehow less satisfying, more a patchwork, but is honestly representative, and enriched with "Biographical" including good bibliographical Notes at the end. Barker, Bottrell, Gogarty, Joyce, Read, 3 Sitwells, Bernard Spencer, Laurence Whistler, are well included; and a few Pudneys and Allotts or unknowns whose specimens do not justify inclusion.

We would expect from the Society's good friend and helper Richard Church admirable advice on speaking verse, and we have got it, with exemplary specimens. He slates "elocution", and prefers the "approach by love", exemplified presumably by the specimens in default of other exegesis. There are faultless sonnets and rich liquids: count the l, m, n, r-s in Gray's *Elegy;* which I would have far preferred to see included for recital to the weak loose lyricism of *Dark Rosaleen* with its unpronounceable lines like

"The Judgement Hour must first be nigh"!

The volume would have been improved by an index of authors.

What I like about *Orpheus II* is its beautiful type and setting: the Prayer Book *Benedicite* set so beautifully is likely enough to eat into a boy's memory as poetry; still more so of course the formal poems — painstakingly meritorious from early ballads to "'Twas brillig" and the *Mole Catcher. Daniel Jazz* but nothing later (Eliot, Waley's Chinesy, Blunden's Pike).

Choose Again means a *second* School Anthology, more facile and more appropriate with its pictures by Olga Lehmann and division into "Ships and Seamen" (with the admirable "Stranded" by Visiak, else unknown to me), Stirring Tales, Earth's Beauties, &c., &c., and Sorrow, and Peace. Splendidly suited to younger pupils.

Madame Snelling's beautifully produced and comparatively inexpensive *Victorian Medley* has a beautiful savour and makes a beautiful gift — indeed a shade too much of "beautiful". The contents are so miraculously finer than the list of contents suggests. J. K. Stephen's parodies of Browning (*Last Ride,* from *Her* angle; and another); Frederick brother of Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Platonic Dialogue by Traill; Mrs. Caldwell's "New Curate"; and Oscar *O'Flaherty* Wilde's admirable end-sonnet *On the sale of Keats' Love-letters*—these are typical of literature and humour several or joint.

The *New Athenian Broadsheets* are typical of intelligent life in Edinburgh —I dare not say a Renaissance, it may have just been going on—excellently produced, a shilling each (such things are never cheap). No. 1 of mid 1947 for the Festival, 6 sides showing 9 poems by different hands, is model to the rest: part English, part "Lallans", and Alexander Buist's use of the former rugged like Gaelic and with the same atmosphere; unlike most English "free verse". Martin Armstrong appears on top of

No. 5, de la Mare on No. 6, Day Lewis inside No. 8, which brings us to summer 1949, and subscriptions are invited for the ensuing year's four issues. And well worth it for lovers of the genre.

Homage to Cheshire, by one of the Society's senior members, is surprisingly good for so limited a theme of—mostly—poems of place. Typical and notable is that on Gawsworth, home of Shakespeare's reputed "Dark Lady", Mary Fitton and other of our Editor's ancestors, beginning

> "Gawsworth, a place of beauty and of peace,
> O man has tenure of enchantment here,
> And none but God is grantor of its lease,
> The rent for charm is ever in arrear."

—a sufficiently Shakespearian and copyholdy echo. All this is excellent and in tune, and most of the others, rich in association and often in poetic image.

Our *Cornish Chorus* on the other hand is by no means the work of one hand but studded with prose and verse from Colleer Abbott to (again) de la Mare. Geoffrey Grigson proffers us cottages of mud mixed with straw,

> "The death, copulation, and birth under their flaked
> Whitewash are of woodlice and spiders":

and otherwise the poem gives a picture: but I can't help it, I prefer Mr. Grigson's anthologies to that sort of thing. Richard Carew's 1600 prose on the Sayne (or net) is a delight. Both for place-lovers and poets this is a worth-while collection.

The *Yorkshire Dialect Anthology* (Local Society's semi-centenary) is the first such known to me and is a good scholarly work—from one rare sixteenth century dialogue over to the last few decades for nearly all the rest. There is a good index, biography and bibliography, and half the book is a valuable set of notes on Yorkshire rhymes &c., skilfully indexed. As an old Green Howard I am charmed.

I know the joy with which I have welcomed excellent poetry from my own aboriginal Australia (notably the late Norma L. Davis, a young woman far too little known), and the surprise with which the public learn that the Dominions and Colonies produce real poetry; particularly so in their relation to landskip and the natural features, which include of course their own typic emotions. This from *Rhodesia* is no exception. Facile yet well chosen stanzas are found in abundance (under the echoing name of Andrew Lang amongst others). Of semi-epic form, K. Fairbridge's "Slaying Song" is fascinating rapportage of savage custom. For subtlety in more modern vein and pattern I admired Lewis Hastings, notably "Sub Specie Aeternitatis".

Mr. Hamilton Fyfe has collected most of the tolerable poems on *cats,*

which excludes Miss Ruth Pitter's but includes one of his own. Cat-lovers will, mostly, love it.

For Your Tomorrow is the work of English "public-schoolboys" (nothing common, dear me no) killed in the 1939-45 war. Best known are Frank Thompson (killed as a communist parachutist Major of our Royal Intelligence Corps in Bulgaria, near what is now called "Tomsonovka": son of Gandhi-ji's friend and expert the late Edward Thompson) and Sidney Keyes, who gets undue space. J. D. Maclure has a sonnet fit to put alongside Rupert Brooke's famous five.

Mr. Sergeant's school collection has no poem nor poet save Howard Sergeant and a Pudney not found in the books already noticed. Meritorious stuff otherwise.

And *Samples*, reminiscent of Mr. Arthur Stockwell's eternal booklets, contains poems by five hands, of some of which "copy has been accepted by the Queen". The poems of Bratton are as interesting as his Editor suggests,

> "Have I spent too long at the potter's wheel,
> Not long enough at the feet of Pan?
> Is that the reason why now I feel
> Past prime a bewildered man?"

The answer is definitely Yes for most of us, and the more we are poets the more we are Pan. Hep Hanow makes sense, and beauty: Ben Edwards not so.

SHORT REVIEWS

USES AND ABUSES

The Ballads by M. J. C. Hodgart (Hutchinson's University Library, 7s. 6d.)

A Book of Ballads edited by Roland Gant (Grey Walls Press, 3s. 6d.)

Tribute to Wordsworth edited by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford, with an introduction by Herbert Read (Wingate, 12s. 6d.)

The Cumberland Wordsworth by Howard Sergeant (Williams and Norgate, 7s. 6d.)

"What is the use of yet another book on the ballads?" disarmingly asks M. J. C. Hodgart in the introduction to his own work on the subject. Certainly this field has been so extensively covered that the Book of Ballads selected and prefaced with an essay by Roland Gant, pleasant though it is, seems a little pointless. On the other hand, no apologia is needed for Mr. Hodgart's discerning and scholarly survey. He is never theoretical, but eminently practical as a guide should be to what he himself calls "jungle territory." The ballad cosmos into which he leads us, however, is far more terrifying than any jungle; in the light of what he has to say, it is easy to

understand why ballads, apart from the fact that, with few exceptions, they are both "amoral and tragic", should create such a sinister effect in the mind of the imaginative reader. A chapter of great interest is that in which Mr. Hodgart applies Eisenstein's analysis of montage to the ballads, taking as his example "Sir Patrick Spens" and demonstrating that this does not consist of a continuous sequence of events but of a series of rapid flashes or film "shots". Throughout, Mr. Hodgart has something fresh and thought-provoking to say; he has never, to quote his own words, "heaped up a great mound of speculation and controversy over a handful of splendid poetry."

"What is the use of yet another book on Wordsworth?" This time, the question is mine, for the centenary has let loose such a number of volumes, great and small, dealing with every aspect of the poet, that it has become difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. There is both wheat and chaff in "Tribute to Wordsworth", an excellently conceived book. the first part of which is devoted to relevant passages from nineteenth century critics—it is amusing to find that Swinburne ranked the "Ode to Duty" considerably above "Intimations of Immortality—and the second part to essays by 20th century writers. Of these, "Wordsworth and Tradition" by John Heath-Stubbs and "Common Speech and Poetic Diction in Wordsworth" by G. S. Fraser are outstanding. "Wordsworth the Person (a horrible title, by the way) with which Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford preface the book is curiously infelicitous; to find such phrases as "a frustrate Pygmalion condition" and "the Caesar of his ethos" cheek by jowl with "*low-voltage* domestic feeling"—the italics are mine—is disconcerting, to say the least of it.

Howard Sergeant's "The Cumberland Wordsworth" led me up the garden-path. Every chapter lured me on and convinced me that I was on the verge of discovering something fresh about Wordsworth which it was vital for me to know. That I never did discover it, not even when I came to the last page, may be my fault, and not Mr. Sergeant's; I only know that I closed the book feeling thoroughly frustrated.

WALDO CRANE

AMERICANA

The Lost Son by Theodore Roethke (John Lehmann, 6s.)

A Voice in the Wind by Joseph G. Moreno (Cosmic Age Press, 2 dollars).

Poets of the Pacific, 2nd series edited by Yvor Winters (Stanford University Press, 3 dollars.)

Poetry Awards, 1949 (University of Pennsylvania Press, distributed by Oxford University Press, 16s.)

The Soaring Flame by Mary O'Connor (Avalon Press, Arkansas).

Durable Fire by Joseph Joel Keith (The Decker Press, 2 dollars.)
Balsam Boughs by Stellanova Osborn (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.)
The Night is where you Fly by Glen Coffield (The Centaur Press, San Francisco.)
Selected Poems by Alice Duer Miller (Methuen, 5s.)
And in the Human Heart by Conrad Aiken (Staples, 5s.)
Poems and Ballads of the Jersey Shore by Everard Stokes (F. G. Adams Company, New York, $1.25)
An Acre of Seed by Theodore Spencer (Harvard University Press, distributed in London by the Oxford University Press, 20s.)
The Tears of the Blind Lions by Thomas Merton (New Directions Press, Norfolk Connecticut, $1.25)
Versus by Ogden Nash (J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 7s. 6d.)
Poems 1938-1939 by Robert Lowell (Faber, 9s. 6d.)

The list above represents a cross-section of work by American poets published during the past eighteen months, and while it may provide some pleasant moments it certainly does not show one tenth of the originality of *A Phoenix too Frequent* by Christopher Fry, which a New York audience managed to kill after five nights.

Upon the principle of getting the worst over first, let me say that Mr. Roethke, whom W. H. Auden says is "instantly recognisable as a good poet" is instantly recognisable to me as a bad one. An ex-tennis coach turned Professor of English, he serves up a complete set of all the faults which have tired us for the past twenty years. Even Mr. Moreno, who has written a moralising epic, can be said to have failed a marathon honestly where Mr. Roethke has failed a hundred yards.

The poets of the Pacific are competent, if academic rather than musical, but at least their style reads pleasantly whereas the *Poetry Awards* anthology is a hodge-podge of styles in which there are poems by the editors of small poetry magazines, although one had thought that the intention was for the editors to choose their contributors' work. Rather more praiseworthy is the way in which local Presses in Arkansas, Illinois and Iowa have produced the pleasantly traditional poems of Mary O'Connor, Joseph Joel Keith and Stellanova Osborn, and if Glen Coffield's book from the Centaur Press, San Francisco, possesses woodcuts which look much the same whichever way up you hold them, at least its publication shows a worthwhile local effort to keep the flag of poetry flying.

Readers of *The White Cliffs* will need no introduction to Alice Duer Miller's *Selected Poems* which are neat, clear and feminine, while Conrad Aiken's book of sonnets makes one wonder why this form is unfashionable and reminds us that he is the author of that incomparable poem *John Deth*. Also traditional in style, Everard Stokes alternately pleases by his sense

of the beauty of flowers and exasperates by his inability to describe human beings.

Of the remaining books, Theodore Spencer's is a complete disappointment and quite unworthy of the poet who wrote that exquisite epitaph upon a dandy and his lady. Thomas Merton is far more interesting and has achieved success as a publicised Catholic monk in other fields.

Penultimately we have the evergreen Ogden Nash whom his English publishers have not served by retaining some rather incomprehensible American poems in their edition. Fortunately, however, we can understand and chuckle over verses like the following:—

"The people upstairs all practise ballet.
Their living room is a bowling alley.
Their bedroom is full of conducted tours.
Their radio is louder than yours . . .
I might love the people upstairs wondrous
If instead of above us, they lived just under us."

But we cannot chuckle over our last book, the proud blurb of which states that the author, Mr. Robert Lowell, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1947, given a Guggenheim Fellowship and a grant of 1,000 dollars, and appointed as a Consultant to the Library of Congress. For these facts, we feel, will be lost on the English reader who finds either poems so full of local references that he must in all honesty proclaim himself unable to appreciate them, or else a vigorous amalgam of every eccentric style which has bludgeoned its way into print during the past ten years.

JOHN BAYLISS

NAZI NEROS

German Poetry 1944-1948 by Leonard Forster. Cambridge (Bowes and Bowes, 6s. net)

Often, when on roof-watch as a warden, I saw the increasing fleets of bombers thunder along in the night sky towards Germany, I wondered what verbal response could be the measure of the anguish Germans must feel, when these machines of destruction approached their towns. This essay of Professor Forster's, documented by a goodly selection of poems, brings the information, and proves once more, that nothing will silence poets, their cities may burn to ashes, their country may crumble away, the dead may litter the streets—in spite of it all poets remain true to their vocation, and as imaginative witnesses speak and sing in the midst of fear and despair.

As is evident from the poems quoted in this essay, by 1943, Nazi heroism and self-sacrifice was already slowly changing into despair. The young German poets see clearly that, once again, their gullible nation had been

deceived, that the collapse of the Reich was inevitable, and Germans stood in peril of losing the human shape and the human soul by trying to become supermen. The spirit of a deep disillusion and repentance begins to be manifest in poetry and some German poets glorify the cleansing fire brought to their land by the Allied Bombers, here metamorphosed to a "Silberhelle Todesvoegelschar". It is not surprising, that, as Professor Forster writes: "Fire is the aspect of war which has affected contemporary poets most powerfully . . . it calls up immediate and terrible experiences, sometimes amounting to obsession." I find it equally understandable, that groping for new ideals and new directions, so many of these German poets should long for "Zeitlosigkeit" (Timelessness) and "Unwandelbarkeit" (Steadfastness).

Among the selected poems are some, which are based on haunting and gruesome experiences in P.O.W. camps. Personally, I find most moving of all, those German poems, which sing of the "new" joy of re-discovering the simple pleasures and simple beauty of Nature: the beauty of a tree, of the setting sun, and the loveliness of the song of birds. But for the few who go back, their is the legion of those who search for new values, new realism, surrealism, demonism, neo-baroque (exploitation of some anguished seventeenth-century poets), neo-classicism etc., all seem to have their protagonists in present-day Germany. In spite of Gerhart Hauptmann (*Diary*, April 14, 1945) who, in his last despairing days called Goethe "that naive philistine", the Goethe tradition is still followed by many. One of the most striking facts is the popularity of the strictest verse-forms, especially that of the sonnet. A third of the volumes of verse taken into consideration by the editor, contain sonnets or are sonnet-sequences. I suppose, with so much uncertainty surrounding them, German poets cling to the stable forms of verse as neurotics do to the discipline enforced by a healer. Professor Forster rightly reminds us, that however great their sufferings were, it has not made German poets love us more. They may even be tempted to use their suffering to win a moral victory over their conquerors. They all want to put an end to the Past and begin once more, but what that beginning is going to be, depends on them, and will have to be seen first to be believed before, perhaps, trusted.

Having re-read the selected poems in a sequence, I must confess that I am moved by the beauty of the new language of German poetry. There is much slimness of expression, where formerly fattened phrases were customary, and there is power in the concrete immediacy of images. Living in their Fatherland at a time when it was a furnace day and night, the German poets have not only learned a new way of feeling (intense without being sentimental) but also of a poetic speech, which is almost action, Greek athletic action in some instances. While Germany was burning, she became the nest of (possibly) repentent, singing Neros.

JOSEPH BARD.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

As one who has given public readings of verse and found an immediate and enthusiastic reception for certain of Mr. MacNeice's poems I feel some astonishment that Mrs. Cummins, your reviewer of the *Collected Poems 1925-48,* has failed to discover this poet's positive philosophy. This is apparent in "The Kingdom", a poem hailed by Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, as one of the great poems of this century.

"Under the surface of flux and of fear there is an underground
movement,
Under the crust of bureaucracy, quiet behind the posters,
Unconscious but palpably there—the Kingdom of Individuals."

This theme sings through many of his recent poems. Mrs. Cummins says that Mr. MacNeice's recurring theme is "It's no go". That simply is not true. The lines quoted from "Prayer Before Birth" (surely a great poem of all time) reflect the horror of these times. Yet an earlier stanza says,

"I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light
in the back of my mind to guide me."

Later in the poem he pleads, "O fill me with strength" that he may defeat all those who would destroy his individuality and entity.

Did Mrs. Cummins read the poem which follows immediately in the Collected edition? In this, "Precursors", there is a fervent prayer for a stripping bare of the spirit and a renewal of life. There are those who succeed in preserving their humanity and who have a "white light in the back of their mind to guide them".

"Yet one or two we have known who had the gusto
Of wind and water-spout, and one or two
Who carry an emerald lamp behind their faces
And—during thunder storms—the light comes shining through."

Evidence of Mr. MacNeice's rejection of utter defeatism abounds in his later poems. His "Springboard" brought a fresh draught of air and light with it and a timely reminder that hope lies in the work and faith of the individual. Perhaps the white light in the back of the mind is an awareness of God? This creed finds little acceptance in the political field. But few would deny that in it lies a recipe for our ills. We can't all be Winston Churchills or wardens of Salvation Army hostels, but in our own ways we are not without influence. Not yet.

Mr. MacNeice has clearly got to the root of the matter, and because I

have been shocked by the tepid or unseeing reviews of his work I am impelled to express a contrary point of view.

I am, etc.,

JOHN HOLGATE.

Our Reviewer replies:—

Sir,

Mr. Holgate has in part misunderstood me. I thought I had made it quite clear that I had the greatest admiration for Mr. MacNeice's work, but personal likes—or for that matter, dislikes—have nothing whatever to do with one's critical faculty. As a case in point, I infinitely prefer Gerard Manley Hopkins to Milton, but I am fully aware that Milton is by far the greater poet. To revert to what Mr. Holgate says, I agree that there are glimpses of a positive philosophy in "The Kingdom" and in a few of Louis MacNeice's other poems, but these glimpses are not enough. I quoted one stanza of "Prayer before Birth" in my review to support my argument; Mr. Holgate now quotes another, but surely he must have realised that even while the embryo begs for the "white light at the back of the mind", for beauty and compassion, it is only too desperately aware of what it will suffer at the hands of man. If this isn't defeatism and negation, what is? I was not trying to "sell" positivism in any form, most certainly I should never have conceived it in terms of Winston Churchill and Salvation Army Wardens; the one point I was trying to make was that since Mr. MacNeice is the personification of an age, he can only be measured by the yardstick of that age. This is not detraction, it is a statement of fact.

I am, etc.,

P. D. CUMMINS.

Sir,

May I make, in passing, a small correction to the reference in your current issue to my book *Seventeen Poems* published recently at 2s. 6d. by the Faun Press.

This selection, as stated by your reviewer, is a cross-section for sighted readers of my *Collected Lyrical Poems* published in braille on the 15th May by the National Institute for the Blind.

Your reviewer, however, uses the words "published *for*", instead of "published *by*", the Institute. My own initiative or sponsorship is thereby unintentionally suggested.

I should accordingly explain that the decision to publish my poems for the blind was taken by the Literary Advisory Committee to the National Institute and came to me "out of the blue" as a pleasant if not moving surprise as you will readily appreciate.

I am, etc.,

ROBERT ARMSTRONG.

Sir,

The current number of *The Poetry Review* has arrived, and I have read the "review" of my book, *Wind on the Heath*, with regrets that it should have been submitted to Mr. Peter Russell for criticism.

If he had read the foreword, he would have noticed that many of my poems have won awards and commendations and quite a number of them have been published in *The Poetry Review, Poetry of Today* and other journals, surely a proof of their poetic merit. But as the only poem mentioned in this review out of the fifty-four in the book is "The Critic", it may be presumed that he took its message personally.

A former Premium Editor, however, liked it so much that he put it in the Highly Commended list and published it in *The Poetry Review*. He evidently had a sense of humour. Without this saving grace a critic loses all sense of balance. If a critic cannot stand criticism, how then can that most sensitive of individuals—a poet?

The comparison of this poem with one of Ezra Pound's (which I have not read) is distasteful to me. I do not write—and find no pleasure in reading—pretentious nonsense.

As to the other criticism, I wonder if Mr. Russell would advise writing satirical verse in lyrical style or studying the latest fashions in poetry before attempting to write. (The "New Look" in poetry is already "outmoded"!)

That any critic should so resent such generalisations expressed in a poem and display his outraged dignity in unjust expressions about the author's work is not criticism and it certainly is not "cricket."

Will you, as umpire, allow me—a member of the Poetry Society for many years and a contributor to *The Poetry Review*—the justice of stating my case by publishing this letter in your journal, and thus nullify to a certain extent the harm done by an unjust criticism.

I am, etc.,

EDITHA M. KELLY.

Sir,

As one of the dozen or so "fortunate" poets (i.e., those who have been enabled by *The Fortune Press* to surmount today's very difficult task of getting poetry published) whose recent work is reviewed by Peter Russell in your July-August issue, may I perhaps be permitted, at any rate for my own part (two volumes of poetry: *The Flowering Tree* and *The Column in the Valley*) to offer some comment on his review from the standpoint of a poet who feels indebted to his publisher for enabling him not only to test the reaction of the common reader but also—and of equal import—to expose his work to responsible, creative criticism.

Mr. Russell finds that (apparently without exception) "one of the most remarkable things about our 'fortunate' poets is that their work seems to have sprung from nowhere, influenced by nothing". I do not know where in particular poetry is expected to spring from if not from an unlocalized compulsion to write it. It is true, contemporary verse in respect of measure

at any rate is frequently, as Coleridge phrased it for his own day, "constructed on no previous system and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience". But that is a quite different matter. And of more than equal interest to it, surely, is the question of metaphor—"the life-principle of poetry, the poet's chief test and glory" (I quote Cecil Day-Lewis)—a question on which Mr. Russell touches strangely nowhere in his review. As to influences, or the absence of them, when it is the turn of *The Column in the Valley* to be considered, your reviewer has changed his mind and discovers surprisingly in my work a marked exception: "Influences as ill-assorted as T. S. Eliot and Milton do not assist the reader to enjoy this confused and formless poem".

A poet whose hope and intention are that his work shall prove an intelligible communication and a pleasure to the reader both on account of its relevance in the present and its recognizable harmony with great past example, must readily acknowledge that he has been influenced by *something* but I am sure it will be difficult for him to accept that influences as such are or ever can be of first critical importance, unless of course they have proved too powerful for the poet and detract from the originality of his work. This, in point of fact, has been specifically denied by more than one reviewer of both poems.

Although attractive it would be meretricious and altogether too easy to argue that the formlessness and confusion of which Mr. Russell complains do but reflect the characteristics of the age epically presented in *The Column in the Valley*. Characteristics of the kind, of course, cannot be successfully imaged in poetry except through the medium of metaphors. serenely conceived in balanced relationship to the whole text and intention of the poem. It seems not impossible in this case that the classical intricacy of the design which admittedly may not reveal itself at a swift reading and the arduous compression resulting from seeking to describe within the compass of fourteen comparatively short stanzas every phase of our prolonged "*mal du siècle*" may have defeated your reviewer's patience and deterred him from recognizing another characteristic to which a recent review in the *Manchester Guardian* called attention, namely, the poem's profoundity.

In asserting that "*The Flowering Tree* is more concerned with China than with poetry" Mr. Russell admits at any rate that the poems in question spring from "somewhere", but at the same time he gives no reason at all for his suggestion that the value of the poetry is sacrificed to the subject of the poems. It does not, after all, seem to matter what a poem is about as long as it *is* poetry and a pleasure to read; although for a complete appreciation of the poetry it may be helpful to the reader to be given an insight into the poet's seizure of the subject which has influenced his inspiration, in this case the Chinese attitude to the soul and to the universe. This is the

purpose of the introduction which it is true "is devoted to a discussion of relations between China and the West", but what harm in that since it is so important to us all. But it is only a lead, in any case, to the poetry. The theme of *The Flowering Tree* is of special interest and importance, further, in relation to the poetry for the reason that it is the basic theme of all the poems in the volume: Mr. Blunden rightly calls them "a poetical essay."

I am, etc.,

DARYL KLEIN.*

Sir,

I should like to congratulate you on the publication of Mr. G. S. Fraser's article on Sidney Keyes, which seems to me to be by far the most penetrating and balanced estimate of Keyes' work which has yet appeared.

In speaking of Keyes' poem *The Foreign Gate*, Mr. Fraser says: "Though it was written by a soldier on active service [it] might have been written by a student among his books". In fact, this poem was written (in my presence) in Keyes' rooms at Oxford, while he was still a student there, and over a month before he entered the army.

Keyes has been so much spoken of as a "war-poet" that it is perhaps worth emphasizing that only about forty per cent of his poems were written in the army, and that there are none at all which survive from the few weeks when he saw actual fighting in Tunisia.

I am, etc.,

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS.

Sir,

If Lord Dunsany could have told us from his certain knowledge that Tennyson's *Crossing of the Bar* was written at evening and as a direct result of the phenomena he has enumerated it would have been more convincing. As it is (with due respect to Lord Dunsany's especial genius for observation) we are prompted to argue that the irritating call of Tennyson's name by a wearisome friend would hardly suggest to him a lofty directive of Heaven. Nor is it at all likely that the great poet would have waited 68 years after the drowning accident in question for the use of the phrase "no moaning at the bar", considering his vast quantity of writing! As Lord Dunsany has not placed his data on the proven platform of recorded fact we are left to question this very challengeable article.

I would suggest that with persons of Tennyson's stature "the food of imagination" is supplied by memory and the immortal soul.

I am, etc.,

ARTHUR ROW.

*"As umpire", the Editor naturally has offered his reviewer, Mr. Peter Russell, also "a member of the Poetry Society for many years", an opportunity to justify or recant his criticism of the volumes of Miss Kelly and Mr. Klein in the next issue. Mr. Russell has been requested to deal particularly with the points directly raised here by his review.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S JUNIOR SECTION

THE ALPHABET IN CONFLICT

A child of one or two looking at a picture book searches in each picture for something to recognise—a man, a horse, a house, a bicycle. Turning the pages backwards and forwards, the eyes and finger find, over and over again, the object that is known.

To a child learning to read, a strange capital letter has an enticing mystery of shape and meaning. Everyone else is able to recognise it, even in disguise, and treat it as an old friend, but to the child it is unknown and the unknown has this magical quality of containing all that the mind can imagine.

All the letters of the alphabet are queer in shape, austere in design, with almost a surrealistic quality about them, a sense of being above and beyond anything real.

A child has to learn that these absurd arrangements of lines and curves live in word-groups, and each written word has the same meaning as the sounded word.

I would ask you to realise what a terrific exercise in imagination and faith all this is for a child.

Now we know how to read, we look back and it does not seem to have been quite so difficult because it was done so slowly and gradually.

If, however, someone said to us—"you can read, then tell me what this page of scientific research means," we would once again be as baffled as the child confronted with his first capital letter.

The path that leads to a love of poetry is very similar.

First the child looking at the picture, finding something known and easy to 'live with.'

A nursery rhyme, for example, taught to the "under-fives" is tuneful and easily remembered. Later one realises that it is 'constructed' with a fixed number of accents in each line, a selected rhyme to the end words and so on.

Later, as one proceeds from nursery rhyme to verse and on to poetry, one knows that there is this skeleton of bone beneath the living flesh of the words.

In school one has to be a surgeon, dissect and examine this structure, but here we are not going to do that. We will only consider poetry as living and working on our minds and our hearts, not as poems stretched out ready for the literary surgeon's scalpel.

Only we'll always remember that, beneath the picture, underneath the emotion, one can find the work of a careful, skilled craftsman, a journeyman in words.

You know, many adults are amongst the "under-fives" in poetry, they have never progressed beyond a liking for jingles. They have looked at something a little more difficult and have been rather scared of it because they could not understand it at once.

Suppose the child did the same with a capital letter.

So never be 'put off' by a poem that seems unusual or, at first sight, incomprehensible.

It may have a different structure or a curious alphabet or idiom. Someone's put a lot of thought and feeling into it and someone else has thought it worthwhile printing.

In any case no poem can be appreciated by scanning. There is only one way and that is to go inside and wander about, sit down for a while and look at this view and that. You'll always find a door somewhere, with an image for a key, and in you go. Always leave by a different door and then you've two ways back, even after the first visit.

I can guarantee one thing. Always you will feel differently when you re-enter this commonplace world for you cannot return without bringing something with you.

If I may give you another warning, do not feel despondent if you cannot find anything there—if it has no meaning for you— no relation to your life, hopes and joys. You may think, this man has a 'name' that is revered, an accepted reputation and 'I ought to, I must appreciate this, and yet, I can't!'

I've suggested one explanation, you may have to make friends with it and friendship can be a very slow growth.

But there may be another explanation—it may be bogus for there's an awful amount of rubbish masquerading as poetry.

I've often thought that the tying of an author's label is a mistake, that true poetry should go into a realm of supreme anonymity, but that's another story.

Most of the well known poets have written and printed rubbish. Let me prove it and then you will never, I hope, allow your taste to be governed by the name of the author.

Here are four sets of lines written by three different Poet Laureates, two of them very famous indeed.

Dash back that ocean with a pier
Strow yonder mountain flat,
A railway here, a tunnel there,
Mix me this zone with that.

—

They went across the veldt
As hard as they could pelt.

The beetle loves his unpretending track,
The snail the house he carries on his back;
The far-fetched worm with pleasure would disown
The bed we give him, though of softest down.

—

Winter is gone, and spring is over,
The cuckoo-flowers grow mauver and mauver.

Rather dreadful, are they not, and I'd hazard a guess that you cannot tell me the authors.

No! YOU are the judge. Each poem you read, ponder and wonder about has been written for YOU. Each will return to you all that you give and more also. Each that becomes a friend will add something, intangible, immeasurable, but none the less real and imperishable.

In a letter I've just read, one of you says "In poetry the old are no wiser than the young," and there is a great truth here.

Within ourselves we are all poets, for one doesn't have to write poetry to become a poet and never are we living more in the tradition of poetry than in those years before 20.

Then there is the inner conflict that is part, and the most important part, of the process of growing up.

Pandit Nehru said recently 'one who doesn't suffer from inner conflict is a lunatic.'

Without wholly accepting that I hold it true that one who doesn't endure that inner conflict cannot be a poet.

We can 'throw the battle,' casually and indifferently, but on its result depends the type of man or woman we shall become.

I also hold it true that, in that conflict, one of the finest weapons to use is poetry and in the search for it half the battle is won.

In a very short time we have gone a long way from the child with a capital letter, but no farther than you can travel within a single poem.

JOHN GRADDON.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET AWARD FOR 1950

By T. W. RAMSEY

I was glad to see so large a field of entries for this Competition. It is obvious that knowledge of the joy of writing a sonnet—so much greater usually than that of reading it later—is quite widely spread. The first task of the selector is to pick out the specimens which have not found this exigent form to be a strait-jacket. There are not many as a rule, and in this batch there were not more than twelve which one could read without feeling conscious that the poet was setting himself a difficult task.

A consideration of various minor technical points brought this twelve down to the following five:—

On Reading a Recent Lyric by Ruth Crary.
Patience by Phyllis Bower.
Consolation by Joan E. Swift.
Loves Growing Old by Indreni Savundranayagam.
Midsummer Meditation by Joan E. Swift.

These are all good sonnets. They will pass from goodness to greatness according as they have in them more or less of the creative fire which turns a composition of verse into a poem. It is on this basis that the judge must make his final and entirely personal selection.

I cannot feel that any of these five climbs very far toward that height. That which comes nearest to it is that of Ruth Crary. I shall therefore name as winner her sonnet, as it is the one which I can read most often without wearying of it. On this test by a narrow margin I award the prize to Ruth Crary for:—

ON READING A RECENT LYRIC

I thought I had forgotten, till your lines
Reached out to me across the printed page.
Avowals whispered on a woodland stage
Flooded my soul, and birds in towering pines
Carolled once more within me; all my shrines
To disciplined repression crumbled; sage
Indifference, long-studied—heritage
Of the heart-hungered—flamed to bold designs.

A moment only.
Quick! once more the masque,
Denial, courage, and the strength to know
We still are actors in an ancient mime;
Ours not the entrance cue, nor ours to ask
The resolution of the play.—But O
The fading years and O the long, long climb!

RUTH CRARY.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE POETRY SOCIETY: CENTRE MEETING

A Social Meeting for Centre members will be held at 33, Portman Square, W.1., on Saturday, 30th September at 2 p.m. Tickets 2/- each, including tea will be issued on application to the General Secretary on or before 23rd September.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: FRIDAY READINGS

The Readings at 33, Portman Square, W.1. will be resumed on Friday, 29th September at 6-15 p.m. It is intended that the formal reading shall be followed by an Open Meeting for general discussion and conversation. These meetings will be a regular feature of our Winter programme, and all are invited to attend, even if they cannot come to the more formal meeting earlier in the evening. This second open meeting will commence at 8 o'clock and at present no definite closing time has been determined.

CENTRES

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE POETRY CENTRE

Sept. 9th at 3-0 p.m.	*Shakespeare's Sonnets.* Mrs. E. Ward, Kynance, Manor Road, Penn. 2177.
Sept. 23rd at 10-0 a.m.	Day Outing to Stratford-on-Avon for matinee at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Coach starts opposite the Public Library.
Oct. 14th at 3-0 p.m.	Readings by members of The Chelsea Poetry Circle. St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe. (This meeting is open to the public).

THE CAMBRIDGE POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Douglas B. Mortlock, Esq., 187 Histon Road, Cambridge.

THE CHELSEA POETRY CIRCLE

(Affiliated to the Poetry Society, Formed 1946)

President: Dame Sybil Thorndike

Vice-President: Miss Margaret Rawlings

Informal readings are held each month in member's homes, and occasional public readings at the National Trust Museum, 3 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.3. Full particulars from the *Hon. Secretary*, John E. Carroll, 5 Redesdale Street, S.W.3.

THE EALING POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Miss Mary Giles, 36 Kitchener Road, High Wycombe, Bucks.

THE FLORIDA POETRY CENTRES

(Formed 1946)

President General:
Marie Tello Phillips

Vice-President General:
Lillie Reed Zortman

State Presidents:

Connecticut: Lillie Offen Reed.
Florida: Pearl Safford.
Indiana: Grace Porterfield Polk.
Kentucky: Ethel Koger.
Maine: Effie Lawrence Marshall.
Minnesota: Margarette Dickson.
Pennsylvania: Lillie Reed Zortman.
Tennessee: Polly McKibben.

The President General, Marie Tello Phillips, 6427 Darlington Road, Pittsburgh 17, Philadelphia, has recently won eight awards in the League of American Pen Women's Workshop, we are informed by Pearl Safford, 144 N.E. 25 St., Miami 37 Florida, State President of the Florida Centre.

THE GUILDFORD POETRY CENTRE

Details of meetings may be obtained from The Centre Secretary, Mrs. F. E. Coker, 46 York Road, Guildford.

The President of the Poetry Society, in February last, spoke of the problems of a translator and expressed the view that translation of a poem must be a re-creation of the original work after it had been completely absorbed by the translator.

In March, Mr. Guy Kendall, M.A. brought Virgil and the Italy of Virgil into contrasting life, comparing his inspiring love of the soil with his prophecies as to war and his conduct in the troublesome times in which he lived.

An unusual programme made the April meeting particularly interesting, for a quartet of Committee members gave a reading of their personal choice. A "Cotswold Tour" was chosen by Miss Rene Cohen, the Vice-President; "Modern Poets" by Miss Odette Tchernine; "Old Chinese Lyrics" by the Secretary, Miss Clara Kearse; concluding with an Easter message from the poets by the President, Miss Roberta Shuttleworth.

This impromptu programme aroused great interest, the comments by the four speakers developed the underlying mysticism of such vastly differing subjects.

The May meeting was notable for a fine performance of John Masefield's poetry, chosen and rendered with delicacy and a deep interpretive insight by Miss Molly Hudson.

THE HAMPSTEAD POETRY CENTRE

The meetings of the Hampstead Poetry Centre will be held on the first and third Thursdays of the month, at 8—9-30 p.m. at 9 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, N.W.3, by invitation of Miss M. H. Huntsman (Hon. Secretary). Members are welcome to bring a friend.

Oct. 5 Lakes and Streams.
Oct. 19 Austin Dobson and George Meredith.

THE KENSINGTON POETRY CIRCLE

The Royal Borough of Kensington Branch used to be vigorous and a list of over 200 members pre-war is available. It is thought that a large number could now be marshalled. Would those interested kindly inform Mr. A. V. Burbury, M.C., M.A., J.P., at 12

Bassett Road, W.10, preferably adding answers to questions numbered 1, any offer of accommodation for meetings; 2, suggestions as to above; 3, readiness to read or speak poems; 4, interest in making a Poets' Group; 5, interest in a Poetry Discussion Group.

Mr. Burbury ("Arthur Vivian") is a member of the British Empire Shakespeare Society's last surviving Branch meeting monthly in S.E.26 to read a play as cast, and would be glad to hear of those in or out of Kensington who would care to make a local Branch. A good 25 is desirable. Please indicate numbered (1) experience if any; (2) if able on occasion to offer accommodation. Subscription of 5s. a year generally suffices for cards and postage.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Mrs. O. Hasluck, 633 Lisburn Road, Belfast; or Miss H. Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens, Belfast.

THE NOTTINGHAM POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Lake Aske, Esq., 281 Wilford Lane, Nottingham.

THE REIGATE POETRY CENTRE

Details of Meetings may be obtained from the Centre Secretary, Mrs. M. A. Hicks, The Alton, Alma Road, Reigate.

THE SOUTHAMPTON POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Miss Joy Brider, 9 Archers Road, Southampton.

THE STROUD CENTRE

On Saturday, June 17th, the Stroud Centre again enjoyed the privilege of a visit from headquarters, when Mr. Robert Armstrong gave an illuminating talk on the development of Poetry between 1900-1950. He also read a selection from his own Poems which were much appreciated by his audience.

It is good to be able to report that the two recent visits from London Members of the Poetry Society to the Stroud Centre, have resulted in an increased local enthusiasm and several enquiries about Membership. For information, address to the Hon. Sec.: at Steanbridge, Slad, Nr. Stroud, Glos.

THE SUSSEX POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Mrs. Doris R. Richards, Oak Cottage, Eason's Green, Framfield, Sussex.

THE VANCOUVER CENTRE

The Twenty-seventh Annual gathering of the Centre was held on the last Sunday of May at the home of the Director, Mrs. Irene H. Moody Lewis, in West Vancouver.

Poems were read from Juliet Young, Montreal; Mona Thompson, Calgary; Maisie

Nelson Devitt, Powell River; Ralph Stromstad, Trochu, Alta.; Sheilagh S. Jameson, Calgary, Alta.; Mary Cornell, S. Calif.; Violet Hobson, Duncan, Van. Isl.

Local members included Lois Gilpin, Sadie McCulloch, Clara Stromstad, Irene Bruce, Caroline Wilkie, Anne Locheed Grant, Margery Copithorne, Nina Howe Smith, Dorothy Trail, Mary Proudfoot Ledingham, Jean Archibald, Mary Maharg, and Irene H. Moody. A special poem was by Nina Howe Smith—"The Mummy in the Museum, Vancouver," appearing in the May-June issue of *Poetry Review*, London.

The afternoon was opened by the courtesy reading of a poem—"Spring Song"—by Dr. A. C. Nash, of Hollyburn, B.C. (Dr. Nash is an Individual member of the Poetry Society).

The readings closed with a Memorial reading — "The Trail Bend," from *Poems* by "Laird," (Armstrong Lowther, Britannia Beach, B.C., who died May 11th, 1948).

Tea was poured by Mrs. K. Hern and Mrs. R. L. Firth.

The Group will resume activities in September in Vancouver City, and will welcome any writer of original verse who is willing to work and can take criticism. *No fees are required.*

Will anyone able and willing to start a Centre in any part of the country please communicate with the Secretary, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

POETS' GROUP OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

This Group, dedicated to furthering the work of active Poets within the Society, gathers "to hear each other's work and discuss the spirit and substance of poetry". All interested in attending future meetings are invited to communicate with me at The Well House, Ewell, Surrey.

LEIGH HENRY

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S CRITICAL SERVICE

The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing the continuance of its Critical Service for Members. Two poems only may be submitted for criticism, for a minimum fee of 5s. The charge for the criticism of each additional poem is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges, or private individuals.

COMPETITIONS

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITIONS FOR 1950

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize", 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*.

Closing date is 31st December, 1950.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above bi-monthly competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 15th October, 1950.

THE HOWARD PARSONS' EPIGRAM COMPETITION: 1951

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes, endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas; 2nd prize, 2 guineas; 3rd prize, 1 guinea. Entries which should not have been previously published should be marked "Epigram" and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope, as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1951. The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

THE POETRY SOCIETY JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION

The Poetry Society have pleasure in announcing the next annual Junior Verse Competition. Schools throughout the country are invited to co-operate in submitting the work of their pupils.

The Competition will be divided into two classes:

(*a*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age up to thirteen years last birthday. There will be a book prize inscribed by the Poetry Society.

(*b*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age from fourteen to seventeen years last birthday. There will be a book prize, inscribed by the Poetry Society and four additional prizes of one year's Membership to the Poetry Society.

The poem may be on any subject. Closing date, 30th June, 1951. Entries to be addressed to: The Junior Verse Competition, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear the names and addresses of competitors and copies should be retained as these cannot be returned.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1951

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing the fourth Annual Competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject. One of the two forms adopted by Lord Alfred Douglas in his sonnets, must be used; these are:

For the Octave — 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1.

For the Sextet — 3, 4, 5; 3, 4, 5 or 3, 4; 3, 4; 3, 4.

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely marked "Sonnet". Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1951. Address "Sonnet Competition", The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

POEMS OF PLACE COMPETITION FOR 1951

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems, previously unpublished, of not more than 100 lines. All entries should be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author; poems should be addressed to "The Holmes Prize", The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than 1st April, 1951. The judges may divide the prize money at their discretion, and the winning poem or poems may be published in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors are asked to keep copies of their entries as these cannot be returned.